

USING A BROAD COLLECTION OF ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGIES, **MADLEEN LIVES AN INDEPENDENT LIFE.** SHE DOES NOT NEED A LOT OF SUPPORT, IS ABLE TO WORK FULL TIME AND RAISE HER CHILDREN ALONE.



Madleen's story

AN INDEPENDENT LIFE WITHOUT COMPROMISE

Madleen, originally from Germany, lives in Kent with her three young children. She works full time for the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) as a Tech for Life coordinator, a role that she brings personal experience to - as Madleen is blind.

Tech for Life is more than just a job for Madleen. Technology gives her independence, a message she is keen to promote to other blind and partially sighted people.

Madleen was born blind with a very small amount of sight but lost this entirely when she was just 14. At work, she uses a screen reader and braille display for her PC. She also has these technologies for her smartphone, meaning that she can use apps for shopping, identifying bank notes and products, banking, email and GPS navigation.

This technology puts Madleen on a level playing field with sighted people.

"I can just run text through my app or screen reader and read it, just like anyone else would have access to the same information in writing."

Madleen makes use of talking bathroom and kitchen scales and has speech control incorporated into many other household items.

More mainstream products are now accessible to blind and partially sighted people. Madleen owns an Amazon Echo, which she describes as a "fascinating development".

She also considers digital and audiobooks as important progress, explaining: "Looking back just five years ago, I had to say to RNIB customers that only 5% of books are accessible to blind or partially sighted people.

Now we have access to digital versions of nearly everything that is published.

"We can now say to friends and sighted people around us, 'Oh thanks for the title of that book, I'll look it up on Kindle or iBooks.'"

Madleen lives an independent life. She does not need a lot of support, is able to work full time and raise her children alone.

"I can't even begin to say how thankful I am for the development and change of technology," she says. "Without it, I would need support from a sighted person just to access my apps for shopping, banking, reading and emailing. I could not keep down a full-time job doing what I do, my life would not be worth living."

Madleen set herself a goal to live an independent life and feels she has achieved this.

"I use social media, I communicate with friends, I can bank and shop independently. My choice is not limited anymore. I feel included."

I can just run text through my app or screen reader and read it, just like anyone else would have access to the same information in writing.
